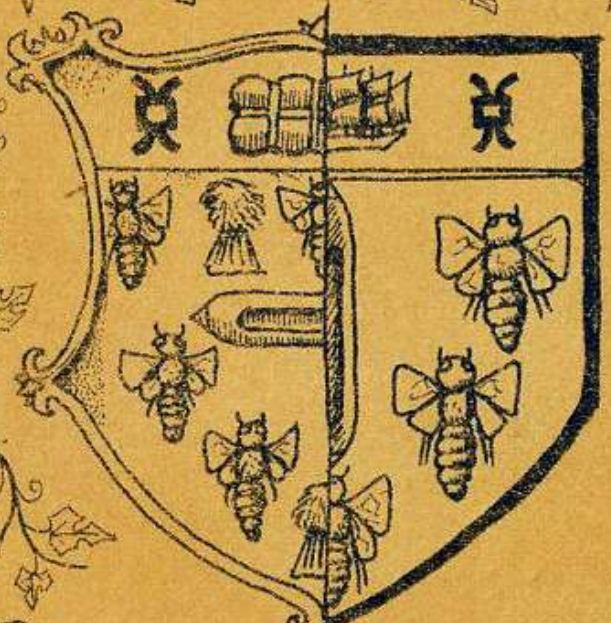
CITY OF SALFORD

GOLDEN... JUBILEE...



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S A L F O R D

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YEARS A CITY

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SALFORD, 50 YEARS A CITY	ALAN SMITH
THE LOCAL NEWS OF TWENTY-SIX	TONY FRANKLAND
MEMORIES	WALLACE BRERETON
FRONT COVER DESIGN	WALLACE BRERETON

ADVERTISEMENTS REPRODUCED FROM THE SALFORD REPORTER OF JANUARY 1926

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The committee of the Salford Local History Society would like to acknowledge the help given by the City of Salford Cultural Services Department.

SALFORD, 50 YEARS A CITY

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On April 21st 1926 Salford achieved the accolade to which all urban communities aspire - it was created a city "by Letters Patent under the Great Seal".

During the rapid industrialisation of the 19th century its population had increased by monstrous leaps until by the 1920's it was more than a quarter of a million, and in August 1925 the first pleas for it to be granted city status were presented by the mayor, Alderman Billington, supported by the Town Clerk and other local dignitaries. He pointed out to the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks that Salford was the third largest town in Lancashire, that it had a high rateable value, and that other towns of less population, notably Stoke, had already been made cities.

It was an unanswerable case, but matters of this importance are not decided overnight, and it was not until March 29th 1926 that the Home Secretary wrote to intimate that King George V "had been graciously pleased to raise the County Borough of Salford to the title and dignity of a city". In those days first and second class post was a blessedly unknown system, and the letter was predictably waiting for the mayor, who was by then Alderman Delves when he arrived at the Town Hall the following morning.

Immediately this long awaited confirmation was received orders were given for flags to be flown on all public buildings and for the Police Band to play in Bexley Square. The trams were decorated, bunting flown across Chapel Street and an extra day's holiday given to the school-children.

During the day the momentous news spread rapidly by word of mouth and all sorts of questions were being asked. Would the Town Hall become the City Hall? How soon would Salford have a Lord Mayor?

The world of 1926 seems in many ways to be light years away from that of the sophisticated and inflationary 1970's. In April of that year the Salford Royal Hippodrome featured George Formby, following in his illustrious father's footsteps and advertised as "a chip off the old block", while in this still pre-talkie age the Langworthy Picturedrome was showing Mary Astor and Clive Brook in "Enticement" and the legendary Nazimova was starring in "My Son" at the Scala, Ford Lane. Finest eating apples were 6lb for a shilling, tweed suits 45/-d., raincoats 14/6d and flannel trousers 9/6d.

And yet oddly enough many aspects of life in 1926 seem like a mirror image of the present day - high unemployment, disastrous strikes and falling living standards, and it was, of course, the year of Britain's worst industrial disruption - the General Strike.

Salford seems to have an unfortunate knack of achieving its moments of greatness at times of national calamity. Every schoolboy knows that its Rugby team always reaches peak form on the eve of a world war, and Judgment Day will probably find it at the top of the league, ten points clear of its nearest rival! Even the celebration of Salford's 700 years as a free borough in 1930 coincided with an era of dole queues and general depression.

So it is understandable that in this bleak year of 1926 the celebrations of its elevation to the rank of city on April 21st were more muted than could have been wished. Yet a city it undoubtedly was, with a City Police Force, and of course a 'Salford City Reporter'., although never, alas, for one reason or another, to be granted the distinction of a Lord-Mayor.

What, one wonders would the city fathers of 1926 have thought if they could have foreseen in their wildest fantasies our present Local Government structure - two tier authorities, Metropolitan Districts, and the rest of the modern maelstom, in which Salford is no longer even part of Lancashire. It would have been quite incomprehensible to them, as it must be admitted, it is to many present-day Salfordians.

But despite everything it is still a city, even if a puzzling anachronism to outsiders who have always presumed that its close proximity to Manchester must mean that it is an inseparable part of that huge megalopolis.

It would be a bold prophet who would attempt to predict what its role and function might be 50 years from now, but a half century is a very short time in its long and not insignificant history, and its citizens can still say with no little pride that they are inhabitants of "no mean city".

ALAN SMITH.

THE LOCAL NEWS OF TWENTY-SIX

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On April 3rd 1926 our local newspaper bore for the first time the now familiar title "Salford City Reporter". The change in name from the "Reporter for the County Borough of Salford" heralded the fact that Salford had, at last, achieved its long awaited status as a city.

To most people, of course, the year 1926 conjures up memories, not of Salford's relatively minor triumph, but of the depression, poverty and social hardship. The local papers of this year however, bore little news of the impending national disaster, and probably in their own way, helped to keep the peoples spirits up during these troubled times.

Perhaps one of the most interesting local events of the year, the demolition of Agecroft Hall, was reported in the Salford Reporter of March 6th.....

AGECROFT HALL - The Dismantling in Progress

A New Home beyond the Seas:

The demolition of Agecroft Hall has begun, prior to its removal to Norfolk, Virginia, U.S.A., where it will be re-erected.

It will be remembered that the Hall which is situated just beyond the Salford boundary, has been purchased by a wealthy American, who has given instructions for its rebuilding in its present form in his own country.

No light task is it to take down such a structure, ship it across the Atlantic and then erect it again in its original form. Hundreds of photographs have been taken of the exterior and the interior so as to enable those in charge of the work to re-create the fine old Elizabethan mansion in its New World home across the sea.

Already great packing cases containing among other things, some of the beautiful windows, have been removed to the Salford Docks, there to begin their long journey.

The rest will follow beam by beam and stone by stone - until Agecroft Hall will be but a memory in the district, a memory which will be slow to fade for Agecroft is indissolubly bound up with the history of Salford.

On arrival at Virginia it is estimated that at least twelve months will be necessary before the re-erection of the hall is completed. The work will begin at the earliest possible moment and it is expected that at least £15,000 will be expended on it.

To the commuters of the period, however, the news of Salford's expanding tramcar service was possibly of more importance, ...

SALFORD TO WALKDEN - First Through Car to make the Journey

The Service to be inaugurated at an early date.

The through tramcar service from Salford to Walkden which was foreshadowed in "The Reporter" in January, will come into existence at no distant date.

The tramway service from Swinton, which is the terminus of the Salford system, to Walkden is maintained by the Lancashire United Tramways Co, and negotiations have been proceeding for some weeks with a view to a through service being instituted.

The outcome has been that a junction between the respective tracks which formerly had been separated by a gap of a few yards at the termini at Station-road, Swinton was effected.

This having been completed an experimental run was decided upon, and the first car to travel along the new route left Walkden on Monday afternoon and traversed the track to the Deansgate terminus.

Interviewed by a representative of "The Reporter" an official of the Salford Tramways Department expressed great satisfaction at the result of the negotiations. "The proposal" he said, "is to establish an inter-running of cars between the Salford Corporation and the South Lancashire authorities with a resulting benefit to both".

Cars would run every fifteen minutes for the first five days of each week, and every ten minutes on Saturdays and Sundays, the through fare from the Deansgate terminus being sixpence. There would also be a fourpenny stage to Moorside station.

At present the arrangements for the service have not been completed but there is every indication that the cars will begin to run at an early date.

Later it is hoped to establish a similar service between Salford and Bolton, but owing to the fact that it will mean doubling the existing tram track, most serious consideration will have to be given to the project before it is proceeded with.

(SALFORD CITY REPORTER April 3rd)

It is to be hoped that many Walkden parents took advantage of the new service and paid a visit to the Peel Park Library .....

THE READING PUBLIC

A tribute to the reading propensities of the Salford public is to be found in the large number of books which are daily borrowed from the various libraries in the city. In spite of the fairly warm weather which was experienced during the first part of this week there was a steady stream of borrowers to the Peel Park Library in particular, where in addition to the gratifying attendances in the lending section there was also a fairly representative gathering in the reference department which, incidentally, has a great reputation for the excellence of the facilities it affords.

(SALFORD CITY REPORTER April 17th)

Leaving their children outside to enjoy the benefits of the paddling pool.....

PADDLING IN PEEL PARK

Among the amenities afforded by the Salford parks in which the children delight is the paddling pool in Peel Park. The Easter holiday proved that. Crowds and crowds of children eagerly divested themselves of shoes and stockings, to wade about within the confines of the pool, either to sail toy boats or to assist in the sailing of a friend's vessel, and although the water must have been cold (for when all is said, summer is not here yet), the laughter of the children and the evident enjoyment they got out of their wade, seemed more reminiscent of Blackpool or Southport than Peel Park.

(SALFORD CITY REPORTER April 10th)

Whilst the various transport departments were trying their best to strengthen the links between Salford and adjacent towns it is interesting to note that the local councils were also working on a plan to the same effect. It is doubtful, however, that any of the councillors present at the following meeting realised that it would take almost 50 years for their ideas to be fully resolved .....

MOVE TO A GREATER SALFORD - Important Debate at Council Meeting.

A Conference of Adjacent District to be Called

At their monthly meeting on Wednesday the Salford Borough Council discussed at some length a notice of motion which was on the agenda in the name of Councillor Jackson "That a special committee be appointed by this Council to consider and report on the advisability or otherwise of promoting a Bill in Parliament to federate or amalgamate Salford with Manchester, Stretford, Eccles, Swinton and Pendlebury, Prestwich, and any other district that may be necessary to form a county council, or alternatively,to federate or amalgamate with Salford any of the above mentioned districts. That the following be the committee, The Mayor (Alderman Delves), the Deputy Mayor (Alderman Billington), Alderman Phillips, Councillors Bloom, Corbey, Finburgh, J.F.Jones, Jackson and Johnson ".

Councillor Jackson, moving his notice of motion said he wanted the Council to consider it on broad lines. He had never considered himself merely a burgess of Salford, but always as a member of a great community made up of Salford, Manchester, Eccles, Swinton, and all those other towns around. He had worked in the city and the borough, and to all practical purposes they were all one. They were separated only by certain artificial boundaries, and the general public very often did not know when they were in the borough or when in the city. All the members of the council deplored the condition of the entrances into the borough. For years and years nothing had been done and all the time traffic had been increasing. Today the traffic problem between Salford and the city was a danger. There were certainly no users of the Salford tramcars who were satisfied with the way they were dumped down at Deansgate, and he did not see how it could be altered, unless they came to some sort of arrangement for a joint board or possibly by amalgamation.

(SALFORD CITY REPORTER February 6th)

Perhaps the final views of our City should be the ones given by Sir Harry Lauder, who was appearing in Salford at the time it received its new status .....

SIR HARRY LAUDER - Interesting Views on the City of Salford.
SPECIAL INTERVIEW.

"Never found a more hospitable people"

Sir Harry Lauder, the famous Scots comedian, who is appearing at a Salford theatre for the first time since the year 1912, has had a great welcome from local people. In an interview with a "Salford City Reporter" representative this week he expressed himself delighted with all that had occurred during his stay in the City of Salford, and his only regret was that he could not stay longer.

Sir Harry received our representative in his dressing-room, just after the curtain had separated him from an enthusiastically cheering house. "Am I glad to be here?" he said. "I should say that I am. On every side of me I find folks doing all they can to make this short week last in my memory. I can hardly tell you how I appreciated it when I was met by the Mayor and Mayoress on Sunday afternoon at the station. It is no small honour when the Chief citizen and magistrate of a place of the size and importance of Salford comes to the station to greet one.

"I had heard something about the new city before I came here but I did not realise how much Salford people think of their town. They are out for the best. The new status should lead to great developments in the future. I have been surprised at the busy appearance of your streets and the general air of activity which pervades the city. Until I had the opportunity such as this week has afforded, of getting to know Salford better, I had not fully realised how important a town it really is. The importance of Salford is not as widely appreciated as it ought to be".

I was very impressed,"said Sir Harry, "with the number of small businesses which are carried on by Salford people. It is these numerous small activities which, taken together, help to build up the prosperity of a city. I found Salford a hive of industry, and this industry was not confined only to the large works. As I said, there is a surprisingly large proportion of small businesses operating and seemingly very successfully.

I was certain", continued Sir Harry, "that my stay here was to be a happy one. The good wishes I received on Monday at the Town Hall were a very pleasant beginning for the week, and of course I am pleased that the good wishes for my success in Salford have been gratified. It impresses me to see how Salford people like the old songs like 'Roamin in the Gloamin', and the way they join in the choruses seemed to bring back the old music hall days, when everybody was ready to sing anything. It was like going back to old times, and I wish we could do that some times. The way people will throw off their restraint and join in a song they like will show anybody that our friends from across the Atlantic may catch the fancy of the audience with their songs of a moment but it is the old songs of the Homeland that grip the heart. In all my travels I have never found a people more hospitable than Salford people, and I hope I will be able to return and meet everybody again."

(SALFORD CITY REPORTER 24th April)

Safe in the knowledge that these comments would still ring true today let us look to the future together with the hope that we need never be ashamed to say that we belong to one of the finest cities in the country - THE CITY OF SALFORD.

TONY FRANKLAND.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

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This is an extract from the childhood memories of Mr.Brereton, the whole of which we hope to publish during the coming year.....

Nobody lives in Carnarvon Street. It is a street of gable ends, the cross-bar of the letter 'H' that joins the uprights of Turner Street and Wellington Street. Two other streets are sliced in half by Carnarvon Street - Cardiff Street and the street where I was born, King Street.

This small complex of streets formed the whole world of my earliest childhood. The unbroken South side of Turner Street formed a protective barrier from a strange, fearful area where the youth was rough, even hostile. Many of them had their hair close cropped and some wore no shoes. They made free use of forbidden words. North of Wellington Street, however, children were rather sparse and aloof. They did not congregate in gangs and they always dressed as though it was Sunday. I always felt grateful that fate had decreed that I should be born where people are normal and ordinary. Leicester Road formed the Eastern barrier to my world. It was a busy main Road with fast motor cars, heavy lorries and swaying open-topped tram-cars. Beyond this Road was the formidable fortress of Leicester Road School. Built in the days when architects were artists - red stock brick with terra-cotta ornament and art-noveau iron gates. It was here that I started my education at five years old and completed it at fourteen. The western frontier was Tully Street, a street of many moods that started in the barbaric southern territory and led to the quiet elegance of the north.

It was along Tully Street that I would make my way to Sunday School, the Singleton Mission situated in the heart of hostile territory. It was an offshoot of Singleton Church in the northern snoblands. In my childhood imagination I had believed that the mother church had sent out brave missionaries to establish a religious outpost in the wild jungle of southern Tully Street. To the west of this street was rather a wierd area. Although the houses were similar to ours, the people never seemed to appear. Not a single child played in the streets and no adult chatted on the door-step on the warm summer evenings. The houses were clean and neat but you never saw them 'stoning' the steps and window sills. Perhaps they were night people who came alive when we were asleep in bed. These streets broke the regular grid-iron pattern of the Carnarvon Street area which made them worthy of further exploration. As there was no population here, the only fear was getting lost.

Back in our own domain, the chief focal point was Hulse's the corner shop. This stood at the corner of Turner Street and Carnarvon Street and was the meeting place for the kids of the district. The older ones would teach us the strange chanting games "the big ship sails through the ally, ally-o" "Stand and face your lover" and many others that we in turn would pass on. There was a friendly gas lamp which in winter would cast a warm yellow glow on the scene. This little world within a world was where I felt safe and secure in my tender years.

Of course during most of this period, home life, school life and leisure time were superimposed upon one another. Although I tell them as separate accounts, they were actually dovetailed together and if I were to take the events in chronological order the reader would become either bored or dizzy.

The streets where we played are still there and a third generation of children play with their expensive toys - toys that would be undreamed of in my day. The streets that are now smooth with tarmac were once stone flags and granite setts. The tall electric street lamps were once gas lamps, shorter and double the number.

My first friend was "Brother Wyatt". His real name was Arthur but for some reason, everybody called him Brother. Almost a year younger, he started school later than I did, otherwise we were inseparable. Together we would be ejected into the streets to play, perhaps with a jam butty to ward off hunger until the next meal. We would make our way to Hulse's corner where we would probably find others. Goeff Collins, Eric Jackson, Stanley Mills, Bernard Brooks, Bill Wilson are just a few of the names that I remmeber. There were girls of course who sometimes joined in our games but most of our adventures were all male affairs. I mention these names as they may be of interest should this account fall into their hands and I must apologise for those I have left out. Like most youngsters we would play hide and seek or tickey.

We would mark the pavement for hopscotch or the more popular game of pole-jumping. In this game you would jump from one numbered flag to the next in numbered sequence using a broom handle. It could be made easy or difficult depending how you numbered the flags. I was not very good at this game. More often than not we went in for less formal games, like swinging round the lamp post on a piece of rope scrounged from the local greengrocer. A halfpenny would buy a cane from which you could make a bow and arrow and we would all become Robin Hood and his Merry men. Sometimes toys were more expensive. A whip and top would be about threepence with another halfpenny for chalks to colour the top so that it would make a pattern as it spun. A great favourite was the steel hoops we called 'garfs'. These were propelled by a hook and they cost between ninepence and a shilling according to size. They made a pleasant 'steely' noise as you ran along and a certain skill was needed to control them. With these we became speedway riders and chalked a track in the street. Bicycles were extremely rare, we were beginning to grow up before we could even hope for a second-hand one. Although many things were cheap by todays standards, everything had a value. You would never see old bikes and prams on rubbish tips. Second-hand parts could be bought in the shops and it could cost you as much as two shillings for a pair of pram wheels to make a cart.

A cart was a great status symbol and most of us had one. With it you could give rides to your friends, do shopping and collect horse-manure to sell to allotment holders. They were quite simple to make. Having acquired your wheels you would take them to the local black-smith to have holes bored in the axle. The wooden box was bought from the grocer for twopence or threepence and the wheels fixed with nuts and bolts through holes made with a red-hot poker. Two wooden handles were then nailed to the side at an angle to suit your height. There were also the four-wheel bogies which could be steered but these were not very popular as there were no gradients to coast down. Although these carts and bogies were easy to make it was usually the dads or in my case Uncle Sim who made them, as we were still very young.

Marbles were very popular for many years. These we would collect, play with and use as a currency to barter with. We did not call them marbles however, they were 'allies'. There were two main games, flirting and tipping. In flirting you held your ally in the crook of your first finger then flicked it hard with your thumb. You had to hit your opponents ally before he hit yours. Only one ally at a time was lost but in Tipping you could lose five in as many seconds. For this game you needed a cup-shaped depression in the pavement. As the paving flags were all of natural stone there was no shortage of faults that could be used as tipping holes.

We would gather round the hole and shout a challenge "Tip you a fiver"! The person who takes you on provides five allies to add to your five already in the palm of your hand. These you would 'tip' in the hole with a vigourous jerk. Some would stay in the hole, others would bounce out. To win, the numbers must be even, for example, two and eight, six and four etc. if they were odd, your inactive opponent takes all. Of course, the game could be played with any number of marbles from four upwards but only the fainthearted would choose the lowest figure. At school large crowds would gather round a manhole cover in the schoolyard., the bar of the handle was missing from the cover, leaving a perfect tipping hole.

There were three kinds of marbles, the cheapest were the clay 'donks'. These we treated with contempt and simply used them as missiles. Next up the scale was the 'pots', ceramic ones of which we all had a few as small change in the barter currency. The only real 'allies' were the beautiful glass ones. Perfect spheres of clear glass with fine, many-coloured spirals running through the centre. The playing size was about half an inch in diameter, but they were made in sizes much larger for collection purposes. We carried our marbles around in small bags with a draw-string. We could not take these to school however and we just put a few in our pockets. If we were successful at the school-yard tipping hole, our pockets would be bulging. Mine seldom were.

On the long summer evenings, there was nothing to beat Kite Flying. Although kites could be bought very cheaply - a paper one was a penny and a 'rag' one sixpence - there was nothing to beat the home-made 'Mandley Park' kite, built to a design handed down through generations. On a fine night there would be at least a dozen swaying in the air above the park, the highest a mere speck in the sky. There would be the skeletons of another dozen on the chimney-pots, roof tops and telegraph wires to the east of the park. Sometimes a kite would sway too much and tangle with its neighbour, bringing them both down, We took it all philosophically and did not bear any malice. Sometimes a kite was so strong that it kept on flying with the rogue kite dangling from it.

Making these kites was as much fun as flying them. The most important ingredient was the two sticks - the longer the sticks, the bigger would be your kite and your prestige in the park. They had to be strong and light however and the best source of supply was a building site. Here, new floor boards would be made of 'tongue and groove' wood. For some purposes the 'tongue' was not needed and these slender pieces of wood provided the perfect kite-sticks. These were fastened together in the form of a cross with glue-covered cotton. Two ends would be shorter to form the distinctive keystone shape. The ends of the sticks would then be nicked to take a piece of cotton to complete the frame. The paper had to be light and strong also. If your kite was big enough you could use brown wrapping paper. This was cut about an inch larger than the frame. The extra inch was folded over the tight cotton and pasted down.

The most tedious job was the making of the 'tailings'. Small, tight tubes of paper about two inches long were placed in slip-knots about two inches apart. The length of the tailings depended on the size of the kite and it was only experience that decided the number of feet needed. Three yards was about average, terminated by a square piece of rag. To fly your kite, you needed a few halfpenny balls of kite-cotton wound round a short stick. Although we taught these skills to younger children in our turn, this art seems to have died and you will seldom see a kite flying above the Mandley Park of today.

With the coming of Autumn and the shorter days other seasonal playthings came into vogue. "Winter-warmers" were made with smouldering string in a cocoa tin pierced with holes. To prevent them from dying out, you had to keep swinging them on the end of a string.

Outside these boundaries, life was very different than my imaginings, as I was to find out later.

WALLACE BRERETON.

The Salford Local History Society was formed in January 1971. Since that time the membership has grown rapidly and our monthly meetings now have an average attendance of over 70. We have established what we believe is a lively, worthwhile and friendly society, interested in studying the history of Salford in all aspects.

The aim of the Society is to provide Groups for the study of particular subjects and to create an interest in the history of our City.

The Society meets at 7.30 p.m on the last Tuesday of each month at Midwood Hall, Eccles Old Road, Visitors are made welcome at all meetings.

We are not a Society of academic specialists and anyone who has a curiosity about the history, background and personalities of Salford should find much that will be of interest in our activities.

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For details please contact our Secretary:

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